

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An automatic white balance adjusting method, comprising:
 - a step of calculating the white balance correction values based on the RGB signals obtained from a color image pickup element; and
 - 5 a step of adjusting the white balance of said RGB signals based on said calculated white balance correction values;
 - wherein said step of calculating the white balance correction values comprises:
 - a step of acquiring the color information for each of a plurality of division areas in which one screen is divided into a plurality of areas, based on said RGB signals within
 - 10 each division area;
 - a step of grouping the color information for said plurality of division areas for every color information similar to each other;
 - a step of counting the number of color information within each of the groups into which the color information is grouped and obtaining a specific group for use in
 - 15 calculating the white balance correction values based on said counted number; and
 - a step of calculating said white balance correction values based on the color information contained in said specific group.
2. The automatic white balance adjusting method according to claim 1, wherein said step of acquiring the color information of said division area comprises a step of
 - 20 integrating the RGB signals within said division area for each color to obtain an integrated value for each color, and a step of acquiring the ratios R/G and B/G of said integrated value for each color and having the ratios R/G and B/G as the color information of said division area.
3. The automatic white balance adjusting method according to claim 2, wherein
 - 25 said step of grouping comprises a step of acquiring the distance in the color information between said adjacent division areas on a color space represented by R/G and B/G, and a step of grouping the color information for said adjacent division areas as the same group when said acquired distance is less than or equal to a predetermined value.

4. The automatic white balance adjusting method according to claim 1, wherein said step of obtaining the specific group comprises obtaining the group, as said specific group, in which the number of color information within each of the groups into which the color information is grouped is greater than or equal to a predetermined number.

5 5. The automatic white balance adjusting method according to claim 4, wherein said step of calculating the white balance correction values comprises calculating the white balance correction values to make the representative color information representing the color information within each group the target color information, and calculating said white balance correction values by adding the calculated white balance
10 correction values for each group that is weighted by the number of color information with each group, when there are a plurality of said specific groups.

6. The automatic white balance adjusting method according to claim 1, wherein said step of obtaining the specific group comprises obtaining, as said specific group, a group having the largest number of color information within each of the groups into
15 which the color information is grouped.

7. The automatic white balance adjusting method according to claim 6, wherein said step of calculating the white balance correction value comprises calculating the white balance correction values to make the representative color information within said group having the largest number of color information the target color information.